and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins.

The Government is conscious of the need to ensure for efficient use of water for agriculture, which in essence is an integral part of sustainable development of agriculture as enshrined in the National Policy on Agriculture. Efforts aimed at diversification of agriculture constitute an important initiative in this direction, because this would facilitate the much-needed shift from the rice-wheat system in areas suffering from the stress on ground water resources. Further, priority is accorded to the holistic and sustainable development of semi-arid rainfed areas through integrated watershed development approach in which the construction of micro irrigation facilities like water harvesting structures, village ponds, check dams, etc. are promoted.

Strike in ICAR

5134. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the staff of Indian Council of Agricultural Research has gone on a strike from 22nd April, 2003;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what sincere steps have been taken to resolve the issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRIHUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) No, Sir. (b) and (c) Questions do not arise.

Studies regarding promotion of oil-seeds based bio-diesel

5135. SHRI R P GOENKA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a comprehensive Action Plan is being prepared to launch pilot projects in different areas of the country to promote the use of oilseeds based bio-diesel as an alternative fuel;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the results of any preliminary studies carried out for the proposed projects;

(c) the details of specific varieties of plants identified for large scale planting for extraction of bio-diesel; and

(d) the details of any known similar projects underway in other countries, especially in Asia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The Government is contemplating